DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 203 794 HE 014 062

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TITLE Foreign Students' Patterns at Canadian Universities in 1980-81.
PUB DATE [81]
NOTE 8p.: Derived from a paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Bureau for International Education (Quebec City, Canada, November 18, 1980).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Developed Nations; Developing Nations; Doctoral Degrees; *Enrollment Trends; Foreign Countries; *Foreign Students; Full Time Students; *Geographic Distribution; *Graduate Students; Higher Education; Part Time Students; Study Abroad; *Undergraduate Students
IDENTIFIERS *Canada

ABSTRACT

The 1980-81 and 1979-80 enrollment patterns of foreign students in Canadian universities are compared. The total number of foreign students increased rapidly during the early 1970s, peaked in 1976-77, and leveled off or declined in the following three years. Provincial patterns, however, did not conform to this national trend. Universities in Quebec and the Prairies experienced a decline that continued in 1980-81, while gains in Ontario occurred, so that the latter province now accounts for 47 percent of the foreign students in Canada's universities. Numbers fell both in provinces that had and had not imposed differential fees. Asian students (except from Hong Kong) accounted for most of the increase in Ontario, and to some extent in British Columbia. Whereas Americans comprised almost 25 percent of all foreign university students during the middle 1970s, this proportion had fallen to 13 percent in 1980-81, and the absolute number decreased. Another feature of the present enrollment pattern is that the number of students from a selected 25 of the least developed countries has declined. A breakdown by geographic origin shows that most Europeans, Americans, and those from India and Pakistan are studying at the graduate level, whereas foreign students from many developing countries and from Hong Kong and Malaysia tend to be undergraduates. Foreign students are particularly numerous at the doctoral level, accounting for one of four full-time students. Their numbers have risen gradually since 1976-77, in contrast to the leveling off or decline of foreign students among undergraduates. The rising proportion of foreign students at the Ph.D. level is a result not only of increased enrollment but also of a simultaneous decline in the full-time enrollment of Canadians and permanent residents. (SW)

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Foreign Students' Patterns at Canadian Universities in 1980-81

by Max von Zur-Muehlen

Almost three years ago, the author examined the foreign student issue in "Foreign Students in Canada and Canadian Students Abroad" (Statistics Canada). This 156-page report reviewed the data in a historical perspective and identified some of the issues that were evolving in 1977. Since then, the quantity and quality of information on foreign students collected by Statistics Canada and by Employment and Immigration Canada, has improved considerably, and new questions have arisen. For instance, except for Newfoundland, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia, all provinces have instituted differential fees for foreign university students. The impact of such measures requires assessment. Consequently, an update of the earlier publication is desirable.

This article focuses on the 1980-81 enrolment pattern of foreign students in Canadian universities compared with 1979-80.

The total number of foreign students increased rapidly during the early seventies, peaked in 1976-77, and levelled off or declined in the following three years. Provincial patterns, however, did not conform to this national trend. Universities in Quebec and the Prairies experienced a decline that continued in 1980-81, while gains in Ontario occurred, so that the province now accounts for 47% of the foreign students in Canada's universities.

HE 014 062

* This article is derived from a paper Dr. Max von Zur-Muehlen had presented at the annual meeting of the Canadian Bureau for International Education in Quebec City (November 18, 1980) and is part of a larger forthcoming study. An abridged version of this report has been published in the January 1981 issue of University Affairs under the title "Visa Students - A look at the 1980-81 figures".
The views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of Statistics Canada or CBIE.

Numbers fell both in provinces that had, and had not imposed differential fees. Growth in 1980-81, as already noted, occurred primarily in Ontario where foreign university students increased from 10,400 in 1979 to 12,500 in 1980 (Table 1). (The pattern was similar at the primary and secondary levels in Ontario where the number of foreign students rose from 5,200 in 1979 to 7,800 in 1980).

Asian students (except from Hong Kong) accounted for most of the increase in Ontario, and to some extent, in British Columbia (Table 2). The increase of Malaysian students in Canada was particularly marked: from 2,100 in 1979-80 to 3,200 the following year (comparable figures for Ontario were 1,000 and 2,000 respectively). The number of students from Hong Kong declined overall from 6,800 in 1979-80 to 6,600, but rose slightly in Ontario from 3,700 to 3,900. Whereas Americans comprised almost 25% of all foreign university students during the mid-seventies, this proportion had fallen to 13% in 1980-81, and the absolute number decreased (almost half of them were in the Atlantic Provinces and Quebec's English-speaking universities). Another feature of the present enrolment pattern is that the number of students from a selected 25 of the "least developed" (according to the United Nations definition) countries has declined, so that they now are only 345 strong.

In relation to total full- and part-time enrolment at Canadian universities, the proportion of foreign students dropped from 5.1% in 1976-77 to 4.7% in 1979-80, reflecting the more rapid increase in the enrolment of Canadians and permanent residents, particularly for part-time study. However, the percentage varied among universities and by level. The proportion of foreign full-time undergraduates in 1979-80 was 4.9%, but ranged from 1% in some universities to more than 10% in others. Such variations also occurred by field of study, from about 1% in education to 10% in engineering and the physical sciences.

Table 1

Foreign Students by Intended Type of Education and by Province, 1979-80 and 1980-81

	Primary and Secondary			Post-secondary Non-University			University			Total*			Percentage Change over 1979
	1979	1980	1980 %	1979	1980	1980 %	1979	1980	1980 %	1979	1980	1980 %	
Newfoundland	33	51	0.4	7	18	0.3	140	158	0.6	180	230	0.5	(27.8)
Prince Edward Island	18	15	0.1	2	1	0.0	36	30	0.1	56	46	0.1	(-17.9)
Nova Scotia	93	95	0.8	29	49	0.9	1,311	1,296	4.9	1,435	1,455	3.2	(1.4)
New Brunswick	130	156	1.3	139	127	2.4	521	535	2.0	820	842	1.8	(2.6)
Quebec	975	874	7.1	799	814	15.1	6,312	6,013	22.8	8,664	8,288	18.1	(-4.3)
Ontario	5,195	7,796	63.4	2,871	2,588	47.9	10,403	12,467	47.2	18,928	23,467	51.2	(24.0)
Manitoba	331	386	3.1	132	102	1.9	1,320	1,242	4.7	1,797	1,758	3.8	(-2.2)
Saskatchewan	182	217	1.8	126	100	1.9	890	730	2.8	1,261	1,121	2.4	(-11.1)
Alberta	664	939	7.6	911	943	17.4	1,782	1,738	6.6	3,510	3,741	8.2	(6.6)
British Columbia	1,514	1,722	14.0	459	666	12.3	1,956	2,219	8.4	4,110	4,839	10.6	(17.7)
Total**	9,156	12,291		5,476	5,416		24,689	26,467		40,801	45,882		(12.4)

* This total includes also the "other" category involving 1,465 students in 1979-80 and 1,549 in 1980-81, mostly in hospitals, in religious institutions and language schools.

** Includes some additional students whose place of study was not stated.

Source: Employment and Immigration Canada, special tabulations of November 1, 1979 and 1980.

Table 2

Geographic Origin of Foreign University Students by Intended Province, 1980-81

Geographic Origin	Atlantic Region		Quebec		Ontario		Manitoba		Saskatchewan		Alberta		British Columbia		1980-81 Total		1979-80 Total		Percentage Change over 1979-80
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Europe	171	8.4	912	15.2	992	8.0	65	5.2	52	7.1	237	13.6	295	13.3	2,730	10.3	2,392	9.7	(14.1)
Africa	220	10.9	1,047	17.4	719	5.8	122	9.8	70	9.6	183	10.5	96	4.3	2,462	9.3	2,456	10.0	(0.2)
Hong Kong	226	11.2	434	7.2	3,890	31.2	506	40.7	324	44.4	576	33.1	586	26.4	6,554	24.8	6,808	27.6	(-3.7)
Malaysia	300	14.9	163	2.7	2,035	16.3	217	17.5	73	10.0	154	8.9	236	10.6	3,180	12.0	2,096	8.5	(51.7)
Other Asia	350	17.3	1,303	21.7	2,131	17.1	167	13.4	117	16.0	282	16.2	435	19.6	4,788	18.1	4,167	16.9	(14.9)
Sub-total Asia	876	43.4	1,900	31.6	8,056	64.6	890	71.6	514	70.4	1,011	58.2	1,257	56.6	14,522	54.9	13,071	52.9	(11.1)
Australasia	9	0.4	10	0.2	90	0.7	4	0.3	4	0.6	36	2.1	68	3.1	221	0.8	235	1.0	(-6.0)
North and Central Americas (Primarily U.S.A.)	352	17.4	1,394	23.2	1,245	10.0	69	5.6	67	9.2	189	10.9	396	17.8	3,717	14.0	2,683	10.9	(0.9)
Caribbean	312	15.5	294	4.9	854	6.9	66	5.1	7	1.0	44	2.5	25	1.1	1,604	6.1	1,646	6.7	(-2.6)
South America	74	3.7	386	6.4	475	3.8	21	1.7	14	1.9	30	1.7	70	3.2	1,071	4.0	1,134	4.6	(-5.6)
Total*	2,019	100%	6,013	100%	12,467	100%	1,242	100%	730	100%	1,738	100%	2,219	100%	26,467	100%	24,689	100%	(7.2)

* Includes some additional foreign students whose place of study or geographic origin was not identified (72 in 1979-80 and 140 in 1980-81).

Source: Employment and Immigration Canada, unpublished tabulations as of November 1, 1979 and 1980.

At the full-time master's level, the national average was 14.7%, but again with substantial variations (from less than 10% in the health sciences and education to more than 25% in engineering and the physical sciences). Foreign students are particularly numerous at the doctoral level, accounting for one of four full-time students. Their numbers have risen gradually since 1976-77, in contrast to the levelling off or decline of foreign students among undergraduates. In fact, at some universities, they constitute one-third of doctoral enrolment. The rising proportion of foreign students at the Ph.D. level is a result not only of the increase in numbers from 2,255 in 1977-78 to 2,341 in 1979-80, but also a simultaneous decline in the full-time enrolment of Canadians and permanent residents.

A breakdown by geographic origin shows that most Europeans, Americans and those from India and Pakistan are studying at the graduate level, whereas foreign students from many developing countries and from Hong Kong and Malaysia tend to be undergraduates.

In the future, more foreign students may be attracted to Canada, especially as opportunities in other countries are diminishing. On a cost-recovery basis, British universities have raised foreign students fees, and in the United States, out-of-state student fees at private and public universities are often many times higher than the foreign student fees at Canadian institutions. Although the issue will become more critical, it had been suggested that policies on foreign students in Canada seem to be lacking at the federal, provincial, and institutional levels.